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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Director, O/RR

FROM : Chief, Economic Services Division

SUBJECT: Functions of the Construction Branch

DATE: 8 October 1951

1. Since our conversation on the above subject, I have reviewed the mission of the Construction Branch as it was conceived to be when it was decided that such a Branch should be established. It was determined that: "The Construction Branch will assemble and evaluate data and maintain files on the construction of houses, factories, dams, canals, and other structures in foreign countries, with particular emphasis on those of the Soviet Orbit, to ascertain what is now built, what is planned or under construction, the importance of the construction to the national economy, and the requirements in terms of materials, manpower, etc., which the programs may involve. It will advise other CIA offices on these matters."

2. The establishment of a Branch to handle construction problems was based on the fact that construction is a specialized industry having its own technology and differing little in fundamentals throughout the whole construction field. That is, the same knowledge of engineering principles and the same materials are required for building a house or office building as are required for building a factory, and the principles of earth moving and concrete pouring used in building highways or bridges likewise apply to the construction of dams. A different shape or size of factory may perhaps be built for various industries but the principles of construction are not affected by the use to be made of the structure.

3. A basic building may house many different kinds of machines and completely different product outputs could be obtained therefrom, but the fact that a building in one case produced shoes, and in another case hats or fine chemicals, would not necessitate appreciable changes in the type of construction involved. There are a few very specialized exceptions, but changes are primarily in the type of machinery installed.

4. It is not expected that a chemist, for example, will know how to build an office structure for chemical company executives or that he will know how to figure the time, labor, materials and cost involved in constructing a large building to house process equipment. The construction engineer is expected to supply this type of answer, based on general specifications that the industry will supply.

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- 2 -

8 Oct 1951

5. It would seem that the original concept of construction analysts working as a group to serve all Branches that have construction problems and to integrate all construction requirements into a national whole, is correct. Should they be independently attached to each Branch that may be concerned with some type of industry -- chemical, iron and steel, petroleum, munitions, population (housing), transportation, electric power, etc. -- the problem remains of coordinating the individual requirements to determine the total effect on the national economy.



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